

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 RABAT 02221 231241Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----231633Z 095630 /45

R 231009Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1687
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 2221

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, MO, UR
SUBJECT: STATUS OF SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN MESKALA PHOSPHATES PROJECT

1. FOLLOWING KING HASSAN'S APRIL 10 PRESENTATION ON ZAIRE TO THE BIG-FIVE AMBASSADORS (RABAT 1943), HE SPOKE BRIEFLY IN OUR PRESENCE WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR CONCERNING THE MESKALA PHOSPHATES PROJECT. KING SAID HE WANTED TO SEE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS MESKALA AND THE QUESTIONS THE MOROCCANS HAD ASKED THE SOVIETS IN THIS CONNECTION, NOTING THAT MOROCCO HAD MANY OFFERS IT WAS CONSIDERING. FOREIGN MINISTER LARAKI CHIMED IN TO SAY HE HAD SENT A MEMORANDUM TO THE SOVIETS AND THAT THE BALL WAS IN THEIR COURT. KING ASKED THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO TELL HIS "PERSONAL FRIEND" KOSYGIN THAT HE WOULD LIKE PRIME MINISTER OSMAN TO VISIT MOSCOW SOON TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT, PROVIDED THE SOVIETS RESPECTED MOROCCAN "INDEPENDENCE" (WE ASSUME THIS REFERS TO MOROCCAN FREEDOM OF ACTION CONCERNING CONTROL OVER THE PRODUCTIONS, PRICING AND MARKETING OF ITS PHOSPHATES, AND THE METHOD OF SOVIET PAYMENTS.)

2. COMMENT: THIS CONVERSATION, WHICH I COULD NOT ENTIRELY HEAR, INDICATES THAT THE MESKALA PROJECT IS VERY MUCH ALIVE, CONTRARY TO OUR PREVIOUS INFORMATION THAT IT WAS FROZEN FOR BOTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REASONS. IT ALSO APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT THE
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MOROCCANS HAVE, AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, SET DIFFICULT CONDITIONS TO WHICH THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT YET RESPONDED.

3. IN HIS APRIL 18 PRESS INTERVIEW, KING HASSAN INDICATED THAT DISCUSSIONS WERE UNDERWAY WITH THE USSR TO EXPAND BILATERAL RELATIONS, DESPITE DIFFERENCES OF IDEOLOGY AND ON THE ZAIRE PROBLEM (RABAT 2183). WE ASSUME THIS WAS PRIMARILY AN ALLUSION

TO MESKALA.

4. THE KING APPEARS TO BE USING A CARROT-AND-STICK APPROACH,
OFFERING INCREASED BILATERAL TIES BUT IMPLICITLY LINKING SUCH AN
INCREASE WITH RELATIVE SOVIET MODERATION ON POLITICAL ISSUES
OF INTEREST TO MOROCCO, SUCH AS ZAIRE AND THE SAHARA.
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Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
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